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AGRICULTURE.

AGRICULTURAL MEETINGS.

The meetings this winter in the State House have been well attended. Members of the legislature and other farmers living near Boston, or visiting the place, are seen there in good numbers, taking part in these Conversations, or listening to them with interest.

It is the custom of the Ploughman to publish the substance of what is said by the speakers. We are obliged to do it in a condensed form, otherwise we could not spare room for one-half of what is said. There is sometimes much preliminary talk, and we make it our constant aim to publish the real condensed meaning of the speaker, when we understand them, as we generally can.

We incline to think that more practical knowledge is now exhibited than when the first meetings of this kind were held. It was once thought by some that the largest stores would be the most acceptable to readers, but this is not so. Farmers are not ready to believe all that is in print, though there may be regular vouchers for the same. Some of our meetings in former years have been so crowded that we were obliged to turn away many of our invited guests.

From these meetings we could not expect a great amount of practical knowledge. It is now a matter of amusement to look back and see the course pursued. The Ploughman has long had the epithet of *Androcles*—prudent in his name, and he is willing it should remain there, practical men will not deem it reprehensible so far as most of the lands of Massachusetts are concerned. Woodchuck is at present the reigning prince, and woodchucks are sold of his power in agriculture.

Farmers who have ever been employed in clearing new land and burning the wood on the lot are familiar with the effects of ashes and charcoal. The largest crops of wheat and rye are usually grown on these burnt lots. So in old fields we often find the benefits of the charcoal, and the soil is better than was left in the state where old crops were sown. Bits of coal are found there for twenty years after the pits were burned; but the notion of letting and others that these bits are never decomposed by exposure is wholly erroneous. We now own and cultivate fields in which numerous pits of coal are found, and once sown in bits of coal, but every bit is now gone; where all decayed wood goes. The charcoal has wasted away and decayed.

Mr. Colman and others are cited to show that 70 or 80 bushels—and in one instance over 90 bushels of wheat have been raised on one acre of land. It is well known that there are various modes of measuring crops of corn and grain. A small patch of corn has been measured by running the line close to a row on each side and measuring around a few hills as a sample. But all know this is no proper way of measuring. Space is all important. It is want of space that limits the product. Corn stalks must have room. Wheat stalks must stand far enough apart to let the air and light in.

It often happens that one square yard in a field of wheat or rye has a much larger growth than the average of the field. We see this in new land where stumps or rocks are left. Now a patch may be found between these vacant spaces that is thicker and heavier than the whole field could possibly be. For there are *side lights* here, and the grain on the little patch. The drill husbandry in England, where half the ground is left for the plough to pass between the ridges of wheat, might operate in the same way. By measuring where the wheat stands, and leaving the open spaces unmeasured, two acres are reduced to one, and the 80 bushels of wheat on one acre of land are grown in fact on two acres.

When such round statements are made if we open them at all we ought to be particular and ask what evidence there is to support them. We doubt not that Mr. Colman had heard the story that he reports. And we are quite willing that all should judge for themselves. We are willing to say that should be considered as doubters of the accuracy of the measure.

CORRESPONDENCE.

ON FATTENING PORK.

MR. EDITOR.—In your paper under date of Jan. 20th, I am very happy to notice an article upon the subject of fattening cattle and swine, by a gentleman in Salem, and also some very interesting statements upon the same point by Mr. Dodge of Danvers. And as these statements are in accordance with my own mind upon this subject, I thought I would also communicate to you some few facts in relation to this matter, hoping thereby to call out from others still more facts, so that the farmer may know better he is selling his grain at a much lower price than it would command in the market in its original state by converting it into beef or pork.

Although I am not the owner of a single bushel of grain, nor of any animals, yet I am the possessor of eyes which I believe were given me for the purpose of observing what is passing around me. And therefore I take the liberty to summarize the plans and operations of my employers, and seeing whether they are the most judicious or not.

The facts which I propose to give you at this time are the fattening of four hogs which were brought the 8th of April last, at a cost of \$10.55. The grain to feed them was

When slaughtered they weighed 1395 lbs., and were sold at 64 cts. per lb., \$103.67, leaving a balance of \$20.08 against the hogs. The measure I have left to pay for the labor. Were it not that I should trespass too much upon your patience, I could give you more facts all resulting in about the ratio to the loss of the farmer, and from all the information that I am able to collect upon this subject, I am satisfied in my own mind that no man can afford to buy store hogs at 64 cts. per lb., and sell his pork at the same price. I am aware that much depends upon the breed of the hogs, and also upon the management of them, so as to obtain the greatest gain from whatever is given to them. But in the case which I have presented to you I have neither one or the other of the extremes, but a case that would be called by our old farmers a fair management of feeding hogs.

P. S. I have in my day-book the case of four cattle which was taken under my observation, that I would give you I thought it would be of any interest at service to your readers, but will not tax you now at this time, trusting that you will pardon me for intruding at all. I subscribe myself,

WHO CARRIES A DAY-BOOK.

It is not generally supposed that farmers or others can afford to buy live hogs at 64 cts. per lb. at 90 cts. per lb. at 75 cts. per lb. at 50 cts. per lb. to fatten hogs, when pork brings but 64 cts. per lb. If farmers could be sure of realizing these prices for their grain made into pork, they could hardly fail of making money as fast as it is safe to make it. There can be but little doubt that the best way would be to sell the grain at these prices provided the land would continue to produce without manuring. A tenant on a farm if he is not restricted by his lease, might be very sure of making money by selling off his produce—his grain, his hay—his potatoes—pumpkins, squashes, turnips and cabbages.

But what would be the condition of the farm if no such crops were kept on it? A portion of the produce must always be expended in the keeping of stock otherwise the farm runs down as the lands of Virginia have. We have farms in Massachusetts that may be kept going by growing but little grain and selling off half the hay—for hay and grain do not exhaust as grain does.

As to profits on pork, they are usually made in the first months of the growth of pigs, when they are kept at little expense, eating nothing but the cheapest food. Farmers can seldom afford to buy shoats for fattening. We should think they should be a very good advantage to sell live hogs at 64 cts. per lb. and farmers far in the country would do better to raise for themselves than to buy at 4 or 5 cts.

Oats have not often been sold at 50 cts. For ten years past they have been sold at four cents per bushel, except for a few months, when large quantities were sent to Mexico to feed the war horses. To enable a farmer to realize a profit on his pork he should have good breeders of his own—he should have a dairy and use all the refuse milk and butter-milk and whey to help nurse his pigs. And where land is cheap he can afford to let his sows and pigs have a clover pasture for a part of the summer. All the corn and feeding and care that can be afforded into young pigs will not make them grow so fast as the refuse matter of a dairy. Waste milk, whey, curds, apples and grass, are more suitable for growing pigs than any kind of food.

A farmer who has a large dairy and plenty of pasturing can afford to make pork much cheaper than any other. He feeds out much that would bring nothing in the country. He mixes cheap matter with his meat and he turns all to account when he sells his pork, and he keeps his lands rich. A man who buys all these matters, and his pigs too, cannot compete successfully with the dairy farmer. [Editor.]

ON RAISING POTATOES.

MR. EDITOR.—I shall enclose Two Dollars for the Ploughman, which I wish you to receipt and forward to me. I do not intend to read the Ploughman yet, as it is a welcome visitor every week, and I am sure it will be of great service to you. I have a little more to say on the subject of potatoes. I wish to indulge myself in a few statements to make, and some questions to be answered. To my mind you do not do up such business in about a tight shape. I want to talk a little about fattening.

I live on a hard and tough soil interspersed with granite rocks, hills and daisies, which want more cultivation than I am able to bestow, for the want of fuel, and I have a little more to say on the subject of potatoes. I wish to indulge myself in a few statements to make, and some questions to be answered. To my mind you do not do up such business in about a tight shape. I want to talk a little about fattening.

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From the seed I obtained at Norwich I had one bushel and a half; and half a bushel and planted one bushel, cut them all into single eyes, and put 2 in a hill generally; spread on 20th March, but not any in the hill, kept the rows clean of weeds, and in October pulled the vines which were mostly 6 feet long, and as green as potatoes are in June. There was one bushel of seed cut in such a manner as to seed 4 of an acre. Now, sir, from 1 potatoe the first year I had 11 bushels; from one bushel of the same I had the second year 96 bushels, measured by myself. On rich warm ground I would not measure in the hill. I have generally found it profitable to let potatoes follow the corn crop without manuring. I hope we shall be willing this year to dismiss the subject of potatoe rot, acquiesce in the course of Providence, and prepare for a large crop, although we are dependent on the Creator's will for the result.

Please give your opinion in regard to potatoes and the best mode of raising them. I will very much value your opinion.

BENJ. LYMAN.

Columbia, Ct., Jan. 16.

Our farmers in this quarter are pretty willing to have nothing more to do with the potato. None can tell as to the cause of it, but all know the consequences. It costs more to set an acre of potatoes—or as we say for the seed potatoes, than for any seed on the farm. A peck of seed corn is a large quantity for an acre; but we use from ten to twenty bushels of potatoe seed. As prices now are—say 60 cts. per bushel, the cost of the seed for an acre cannot be less than \$6.00—more than 20 times as much as the seed of corn. This together with the fact that potatoe tops are good for nothing when the roots are permitted to rot, must be duly considered by such as grow more potatoes than enough for family use.

Farmers are learning that potatoes do not live the soil richer than they found it; though the contrary in former times was generally supposed. And on a farm one is found to be cheaper for fattening all kinds of animals than potatoes are. Corn can be kept over from year to year, but potatoes cannot. With all these disadvantages the potato is a popular vegetable, and few are willing to dine without it.

Potatoes flourish best in new ground and in new countries. Probably we cannot expect them to grow here in future as thrifty as they did in the soil was new. In England the complaints of the falling off and blighting of the potato crop in some of the counties are of long standing.

For potatoes the soil should be deep and should be ploughed deep; for in New England they are more apt to suffer from drought than almost any crop. Green manure is a best for them when the season is not too dry. But in dry summers green manure is drier than soil that was tilled the previous year—that is, when it is ploughed but a short time before planting.

We have found, in practice, that green manure turned up in October of the previous year, with a good coating of grass, and well harrowed down at planting time, makes a good soil for a potato crop. It does not lie so heavy as old ground, and it does not dry up like fresh ground.

If potatoes of good size are wanted, there should be a large acre of potatoes, and the soil should be kept in good order. Our good potato is enough when the hills are first set apart. There has been some doubt among farmers whether the small and unripe potatoes are better than the full grown ones for planting. And some farmers actually raise late potatoes and set them before they are ripe, for the next planting. For there is a risk of deterioration when the smallest potatoes are uniformly saved for a future crop.

Many farmers have been in the practice of leaving the ground fall, making up no hill for the potatoes. But we cannot approve of this. The tubers need loose mould around them, and they never suffer as corn does, by being buried deep. The earth between the rows may be stirred often as you please while the plants are small, but when the blossoms appear the plough and the hoe should be kept away.

Plaster in each hill—say half a spoonful, is as sure to help the potato as any crop we have. Plaster is a sure thing. Your attention is therefore first requested to some of these. One is sure that these must be facts and principles available to all. Editor, I have a little more to say on the subject of potatoes. I wish to indulge myself in a few statements to make, and some questions to be answered. To my mind you do not do up such business in about a tight shape. I want to talk a little about fattening.

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FOR FARMER'S SONS.—ON THE LAWS OF NATURE.—NO. I

These laws respect the world of matter and the world of mind. The benefits of knowing these laws cannot be realized, but in accordance with the *Laws of Mind*. Your attention is therefore first requested to some of these. One is sure that these must be facts and principles available to all. Editor, I have a little more to say on the subject of potatoes. I wish to indulge myself in a few statements to make, and some questions to be answered. To my mind you do not do up such business in about a tight shape. I want to talk a little about fattening.

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of each hour in the time allotted to it, and thus prevent the cause of regret in life and at the day of future reckoning. I close this number by a quotation from Sir Isaac Newton. "I know not how many times to thank you, but to myself I seem like a boy searching upon the beach for the ocean of Truth lies undiscovered before me." Yours truly, BENJAMIN WILLARD.

Addition says, "It is difficult to be idle and innocent, and that our very first step out of business is usually into vice or folly." [Editor.]

QUITCH GRASS.—(NOT WITCH GRASS.)

I do not know whether some former number of the Ploughman explains the vulgar misnomer, *Witch Grass*, which I frequently hear in my neighborhood; if it does, I should have been saved perplexity, if I had seen that number, for, besides being troubled with the grass itself in my fields, and still more in my garden before I exterminated it there after a contest of three years, I have, at the same time been puzzled with the etymology and meaning of the name given it by many of my acquaintances, *Witch Grass*. What can this grass have to do with witches, and witchery? It is used in incantations, and is said to be a "charmed life," that defines the plough and the hoe! What can be the derivation of this whimsical name? I may be a little slow, but I have not been able to find it anywhere on my bookshelves; and I go to St. John, Colver, Dr. Breck, Fenning, Barclay, Barlow, Johnson, Todd's Johnson, and Richardson, but can get no nearer than *Witch-hazel*, and neither *Witch-hazel* nor *Witch-grass* gives any such infernal grass. And so I give it up, finding it more difficult to trace the etymology of the name than to eradicate the grass itself. But by and by, poring over Bosworth's Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, and coming upon our word, *quitch*, in its old form in *Saxon, quic, quic*, and then further on, *quic* and *quic* defined as *Couch-grass*, *Quitch-grass*, i. e. *Quick-growing-grass*, and looking again into Johnson, Webster, and Worcester, and finding my grass, and its proper name, *Quitch-grass*, *Witch-grass*, I thereby experience great relief and satisfaction. And I beg the readers of the Ploughman not to mislead this playful misnomer, *Witch-grass*, and coming upon our word, *quitch*, in its old form in *Saxon, quic, quic*, and then further on, *quic* and *quic* defined as *Couch-grass*, *Quitch-grass*, i. e. *Quick-growing-grass*, and looking again into Johnson, Webster, and Worcester, and finding my grass, and its proper name, *Quitch-grass*, *Witch-grass*, I thereby experience great relief and satisfaction. And I beg the readers of the Ploughman not to mislead this playful misnomer, *Witch-grass*, and coming upon our word, *quitch*, in its old form in *Saxon, quic, quic*, and then further on, *quic* and *quic* defined as *Couch-grass*, *Quitch-grass*, i. e. *Quick-growing-grass*, and looking again into Johnson, Webster, and Worcester, and finding my grass, and its proper name, *Quitch-grass*, *Witch-grass*, I thereby experience great relief and satisfaction. 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